

Brighten up that smile!

Options for whitening your teeth

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Dental health experts have been saying for years that people who drink a lot of red wine, black coffee or dark colas are more likely to have stains on their teeth. But if you can't bring yourself to give up that morning cup of coffee, you might want to consider your options when it comes to brightening your smile. The American Dental Association suggests there are two main ways to whiten teeth: bleaching products and surface-removal products. Bleaching methods involve peroxide and can change the tooth's natural color; surface-removal products use physical or chemical actions to get rid of stains on the tooth's surface.

People who want to whiten their teeth should first talk to their dentist. He or she can do one of three things: professionally apply a product in the office; dispense a product for use at home; or recommend an over-the-counter option. The patient's degree of tooth discoloration and budget will both become factors in this decision. Patients who receive professional treatments typically see results in a much shorter time because in-office whitening procedures are very strong and are usually completed in an hour. By contrast, at-home treatments generally take a few weeks to begin working. As whitening treatments became more popular over the last decade, the ADA developed its own seal of acceptance to help consumers determine the safety of a particular product. The ADA suggests people look for this seal when choosing over-the-counter treatments, including whitening toothpastes. These toothpastes are not as strong as in-office treatments and do not use bleaching methods. Instead, they use polishing agents to improve the tooth's appearance and remove surface stains.


Regardless of the whitening method you choose, it's important to review your options with your dentist. Even if you opt for an over-the-counter treatment, your dentist will be able to recommend one that will work best for your particular situation.



Prescription Savings

Month	Avg. Member Savings
May	37.48%
June	34.57%
July	32.85%
August	37.05%
September	35.39%
October	34.83%
November	33.73%
December	35.41%

Treating Gingivitis



Have you ever noticed your gums bleeding when you brush your teeth? If so, you've likely experienced gingivitis, a common type of gum disease that causes your gums to swell after they're exposed to persistent plaque and tartar. Dentists often diagnose people with gingivitis after noticing they have poor oral hygiene and symptoms such as tender gums, bad breath and a reddening of a person's gum color. While gingivitis often starts off as a mild disease, if left untreated, it can lead to serious complications like periodontitis.

Fortunately, treatment is usually as simple as having a professional cleaning and maintaining good oral health habits at home. Your dentist will likely spend extra time removing any traces of plaque around your teeth and educate you about proper brushing and flossing practices. He or she may also recommend using mouth wash to help get rid of any remaining plaque on a daily basis. If you suspect you may have gingivitis, you should schedule an appointment with your dentist as soon as possible. Be honest about the symptoms you've experienced and your daily habits; a fully informed dentist will be able to give you feedback and advice about preventing gum disease in the future.

Are Canker Sores Making You Cantankerous?

Despite what many people think, cold sores and canker sores are not the same condition. While cold sores usually appear on a person's lips and are very contagious, canker sores are actually a type of ulcer that occurs on the soft inside areas of a person's mouth, like the tongue or cheeks. Canker sores are typically red with a white center and may cause tingling or burning in a person's mouth. At this time, doctors are still unsure of the exact cause of these sores, but they seem to occur most often in teens and 20-somethings.

Most canker sores will heal on their own within one or two weeks, but people who have extremely painful or persistent cases should see a dentist or doctor. Severe symptoms include having trouble eating or drinking, experiencing a fever, feeling high levels of pain, and noticing very large sores for more than two weeks. In this case, your doctor may prescribe medication to help get rid of the canker sores. It's important to communicate with your dentist regularly about any oral health problems you've developed so you can begin treatment as soon as possible. Don't let canker sores make you or your loved ones cantankerous any longer!



Brushing as you Age

As we get older, it often becomes difficult to maintain the same quality of brushing we had as young adults. For instance, some people struggle with arthritis and cannot properly hold floss or a toothbrush for any length of time without experiencing pain. To help solve this problem and encourage oral health in senior citizens, the Michigan Dental Association suggests people try the following tips:



- Enlarge the handle of your toothbrush by attaching the handle to another object. Use whatever is most convenient for you – a sponge or rubber ball would both work.
- Lengthen the handle by taping it to a Popsicle stick or tongue depressor.
- If you frequently drop your toothbrush, try temporarily attaching it to your hand with a rubber band.
- Use an electric toothbrush to avoid having to exert as much pressure and effort.

Talk to your dentist about your specific concerns so the two of you can work out a plan that best suits your habits and routine. He or she can help you devise a solution to any brushing or flossing problems you've come across and give you advice about how to continue your oral hygiene regimen. A clean and healthy mouth is imperative for everyone, but especially in seniors who are more susceptible to infection. Take back control of your oral health and talk to a dentist in your **True Care** membership today.

Q: What can I expect to save with the Prescription benefit?

A: Prices will always vary on prescription drugs and therefore it is impossible to estimate specific dollar savings through any non-insured drug program. Your membership offers two avenues for drug purchases: The Neighborhood Pharmacy program offers 10% to 60% discounts on acute care medications and the Mail Order Pharmacy guarantees an average of 10% off AARP's prices. Should you receive a quote anywhere else for less than our Mail Order Pharmacy, we will beat it by a minimum of \$5.00 on brand name and generic medications priced at \$10.00 or more with no postage or dispensing fees added. Savings can not be used in conjunction with other discount or Insurance cards. Pharmacy discounts are not Insurance and are not Intended as a substitute for Insurance. The discount is only available at participating pharmacies.

Name	Avg Retail Price	Discounted Price	Percent savings
Vicodin	\$17.52	\$11.01	37%
HCTZ	\$8.51	\$6.53	23%
Amoxicillin	\$14.00	\$10.24	27%
Soma	\$37.80	\$17.96	52%

How can your friends and family save at their local pharmacy?



Just by going to www.etrucarerx.com

Protecting your family from prescription tampering

- Look at the package for tampering signs like broken seals, puncture holes, and open or damaged wrappings. These are all signs that the medication has been compromised.
- Look at the medication itself. Never take medication that is discolored, smells strange, or is in any way suspicious. Ask your pharmacist if you aren't sure about the condition of your medication. He or she will help you evaluate its safety.
- Always return suspicious medication to the pharmacist. It's better to be cautious and return something you think is suspect than risk ingesting it.
- Finally, check for tampering every time you take a dose. It's not enough to look only one time because something could change and cause you unexpected harm. To that end, you should also never take medication if you are not alert or able to see it clearly. It's impossible to tell if something has been tampered with if you cannot look at it properly.



Did you know?

You may know that it's not a good idea to consume food or beverage that has come from a damaged container, but do you give your prescription drugs the same amount of scrutiny? It's dangerous to take medication that has been tampered with because it could negatively impact your health or introduce elements to your body not intended by the drug manufacturer.



Anesthetics at the Dentist

People who worry about the occasional pain that comes with visiting the dentist can find relief in a variety of anesthetics. These temporary pain-relievers come in three main types: **topical, local and general.**

Topical anesthetics help relieve pain on the surface of the mouth and generally come in the form of an ointment, liquid or spray. They can be administered as both a prescription and over-the-counter medication. At the dentist, topical anesthetics may be used to numb a person's gum in order to apply a local anesthetic or to relieve minor sores and pains on the surface tissue. Topical treatments generally last only 15 to 30 minutes.

The next category above topical anesthetics is **local anesthesia.** Unlike topical treatments, local anesthetics are actually injected into the oral tissue. Often, a dentist will first use a topical treatment and then inject the local anesthetic, helping to minimize the pain of the patient. As their name suggests, local anesthetics are contained to one area of the mouth, such as just one side of the upper jaw. These treatments last longer than topical anesthetics and may cause a person to experience a numbing sensation for a few hours after the appointment.

The last type of temporary pain relief is **general anesthesia.** General anesthetics are usually inhaled and cause the patient to fall asleep temporarily in a controlled setting. Many times, dentists will use general anesthesia both for complicated procedures (such as the removal of wisdom teeth) and for anxiety relief in people who suffer from extreme anxiousness at the dentist. While under general anesthesia, a person cannot feel any pain or become aware of the ongoing procedure.

However, no matter what type of anesthesia your dentist recommends at your next visit, he or she will first make sure the treatment is in line with any allergies or concerns you may have. Talk to your dentist and find out which treatments work best for your particular situation. This is especially important if you have any oral surgery procedures coming up. With the proper anesthetic, you can minimize the pain and go home with a healthier mouth.



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